

MELODY OF WOUNDS- Saga of A Wounded Civilization

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ABSTRACT

This paper critically examines *Melody of Wounds*, the maiden poetic collection of Nar Deo Sharma, highlighting his role as a socially committed poet, translator, and critic. Through a blend of satire, vivid imagery, and emotive expression, Sharma exposes deep-rooted social, political, and moral crises such as corruption, hypocrisy, ritualistic hollowness, gender discrimination, and the erosion of human values. His poems interrogate institutions like law, politics, religion, and marriage, revealing their inherent contradictions and injustices. By portraying the suffering of marginalized individuals—women, soldiers, and the poor—he foregrounds the harsh realities of contemporary Indian society. At the same time, Sharma’s poetry retains a note of hope, transforming grief into creative expression and moral awakening. His work stands as a powerful critique of societal degeneration while advocating ethical renewal and human sensitivity, thereby establishing *Melody of Wounds* as a significant contribution to Indian English poetry.

Keywords: Nar Deo Sharma, Social Satire, Corruption, Human Values, Indian English Poetry

Nar Deo Sharma, the poet translator and critic of par-excellence is distinguished for scaling the literary work from the stand-point of linguistic and stylistic analysis. *Melody of Wounds* is the maiden collection of poet Nar Deo Sharma in which he has attempted hard to reveal the evils prevalent in the society i.e. corruption, greed, altruism, hypocrisy, spiritless ness, injustice, moral turpitude, hollowness of rituals, and debasing of human values. A. Russel rightly remarks:

“The collection seems to be a fine wreath of provocative poetry that may make each sensitive reader set out on a probe into the structure of society now losing its grip on the individual. Much of it seems to be a direct assault on the hypocrisy of prestige seekers in their angelic garb.” (40)

Nar Deo Sharma himself asserts:

After undergoing the throes of extreme emotion, a poet delivers a good poem. I have painted a prickly panorama of social and political upheavals in my poems. By means of slashing satires, I aim at refining the political desperadoes. (‘Poet script’, MW)

Almost all the poems are drenched in the ink of revelation of social ills with satiric vision, excellent metaphors and beautiful phrases. No where the poet seems detached from the worldly realities of life. In the poem ‘Law Court’ he does not believe in the procedure of law which

‘makes allowances for the hired arguments’ and does not render the pains of victims. False oaths are unerringly taken there and God and truth both are murdered there. He says:

For the readers of your pains How long will you cling to law Which is so myopic,
flimsy? That it attaches credence To such crowd of evidences Who by their false oath
First murder the gods Packed in the bundle Of holy books Then defeat the lonely truth.
(1)

He makes a dirty pen-picture of politicians who have all the qualities of devils in them. They are the sole nurturer of faults and fables in society. He says about leaders:

The x-rayed poverty of the nation Paraded by skeletal, naked children Who pick their
tattered rights? From the garbage of democracy He sees but flouts poor pains By
spatchcocking sophistry Into his political ravings. (3)

Nar Deo Sharma sees the immortality even in the abodes of God and spirituality and adulteration have become the religion of man. People have created the sense of animal in them. ‘Corruption has become the national character of man’. In such situations when women goes to ‘temple or dargahs / to conceive blessings, but / from there they return / ravaged by the immortality / of God’s sacred agents.’ Not only social and spiritual ills are highlighted by him but he also casts his satirical glance on the marriage of the persons in which there is no attachment of thoughts and love is found. Silence is the only commerce to manage them. He pens the pathetic picture of such marital life as ‘they lived aloof / in the apartments of their / clashing thoughts, pricking mannerisms’. He also explores one more scenario prevalent in new generation that is — they are as obstinate as not to leave the curving of their attitudes howsoever it mars the peace of their marriage life.

They could have cultivated The spring of affections But in the barren, hard soil Of their
arrogance, fastidiousness Love was not possible to grow To perfume their fusty lives.
(6)

Indian rituals and orthodoxy is also criticized by the poet here. He does not believe in the rites of ‘Pindas’. They is like the debt to every Indian which he is sure to pay how much poor their economical condition might be. He is not ready to ‘escape old rites that ossify’ the progress of man although this way is very hard to cross. Dr. Satish Kumar says:

“A.K. Ramanujan in ‘obituary’ and Shiv K. Kumar in ‘crematorium in Adikment, Hyderabad’ also expose rituals ironically. Sharma surpasses them as far as the frank and candid exposure of hollowness of rites is concerned.” (40, mw)

He says:

For want of rice, ghee, milk My father gave way To under death, But to satiate The
offered pandas, Ladled out ghee On my dead father’s dug pate And debt heaped upon
my fate. (7)

Both social and individual shortcomings are exposed by the poet here. The poem ‘show of sorrows’, Sharma makes a fine distinction between the sorrows of both — man and woman. ‘Acharya Rajneesh’s Right Place’ is a fine poem where the poet is at his wit’s end to find the religious hypocrisy and showiness in worship. The more gusty use temple as ‘religious hospitals / where priests fob people off / with a veneer of their blessings / for the realization of people’s / desire of wealth, son, power.’ According to the poet in this critical hour only Acharya Rajneesh can mint the coin of spirituality in right manner:

Acharya you’re the lonely taper Burning against the dark maelstorm Of ancient,
inveterate dogmas Is a fragrant bouquet On the ancient graves Of decadent religion.
(10)

‘Dead Joy’ and ‘Letter from a lost Daughter’, both the poems mirror, first the question mark on the female sex and then if they are survived, secondly, the question of their marriage and dignity raises its head for solution. In Dead joy the dilemma of a ‘would be’ father is portrayed well. The birth of a female child makes the hope of a father corpse like and then, he feels no faith in god, but if the child dies:

Your death——— Resurrection of god In our faith. (11)

Again, in ‘letter from a lost Daughter’, the another social evil of dowry is castigated and here the daughter’s dilemma is portrayed well and the daughter remembers with heavy heart that now much her father has to suffer for her ‘in the quest of / a well-paid, educated man who / rated beyond’ her father’s poor dreams’. The poet becomes satiric here saying ‘people clamour for reform but / they live a lie, avoid nice deeds / only such norms of any good / people embrace that never clash / with their selfish ends but satisfy them’. In the pathetic end of the poem, the

daughter urges the father to ‘let her face the world alone’, ‘suicidal note’ and ‘melody of wounds’ ‘suicide’ are the poems about which he himself says:

“My three poems ‘suicide, melody of wounds, suicidal note’— revitalized and redeemed a young woman from her brink of suicide.” (Postscript)

Even amid the tornadoes of life, the poet is hopeful of good life and becomes ready to face pains because grief is the sobriquet of his destiny. So he says in the title poem ‘Melody of Wound’: I have the magic To canalize the geyser of grief Into the melody of wounds. (27)

‘Remorse’ is a living example with acute result of past misdeeds of a son towards his mother. This vibrates the feeling of respect for parents in the new generation which is almost at its vanishing point in the present times. Next poem ‘Padmini’ shudders the modern woman who do not feel the need to protect their chastity at any cost while queen Padmini made futile all the attempts of Ala-uddin Khilzi to possess her, by hurling herself in the burning fire and ‘Ala-uddin got only the ashes of Padmini’s beauty.’ ‘Laxmi Bai of Jhansi’ and ‘Mother Teresa’ are also exemplary poems of love, brotherhood, bravery and humanity. The poem ‘Dead City’ shows the altruistic society feels no need to open its window when somebody is in trouble. The poet says: My pains Quake me Not the city. (21)

The next poem ‘Your Nasty World’ also bears the same theme. ‘Aftermath’ is a bit similar in theme to ‘Remorse’. The only difference between both the poems is that in the second poem, the poet longs profusely for the love of his mother. ‘Heroic Pains’ and ‘Soldier’s Memories’ are a pen-picture of soldiers’ life and their hard lot, waiting for the end each time. Nar Deo Sharma laments at the deplorable condition of soldiers in the same country for which they are ever-ready to sacrifice their life. The poet as the mouthpiece of a soldier says: Ah, how shallow is the love I reap from my country My country’s minted honors Keep me in abysmal wants. (25)

While the same victory for the country, they get at the heavy cost of missing their wives, children, parents, friend, comfort. They make bullets their children and the letters of their wives as pillows. The collection *Melody of Wounds* is a fine example of Nar Deo Sharma’s keen social consciousness and poetic craftsmanship. Through satiric vision and powerful imagery, he holds a mirror to the ills of contemporary Indian society, making it a significant contribution to Indian English poetry.